

Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues, I closely followed reports last year that increased funding for breast cancer research had resulted in the discovery of the BRCA1 gene linked to breast cancer. This knowledge has tremendous potential for improving the ways we identify, treat, and hopefully cure disorders. At the same time, there is also the very real possibility that this information could be used to discriminate against individuals.

No American should have to worry that their genes—which they did not choose, and over which they have no control—will be used against them. My legislation would prohibit health insurers from using genetic information to deny, refuse to renew, cancel, or change the terms and conditions of coverage. It would prevent insurance companies from requesting or requiring genetic tests, and would require written informed consent before an insurer may disclose genetic information to a third party.

These protections are absolutely critical, because genetic discrimination is already occurring. Numerous individual cases have been reported in the press. In addition, polls and studies demonstrate clearly how much the American people fear genetic discrimination by health insurers. This anxiety is so strong that many people are foregoing genetic testing—even when they have a clear family history of genetic illness and a positive test could lead them to take advantage of effective preventive medicine.

This is a human tragedy Congress can and must prevent. In the 104th congress, I introduced similar legislation which garnered 76 cosponsors and was endorsed by a wide range of health and consumer groups, including: Alzheimer's Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Medical Women's Association, American Nursing Association, American Public Health Association, Center for Patient Advocacy, Council for Responsible Genetics, Foundation on Economic Trends, and March of Dimes.

Leadership Conference of National Jewish Women's Organizations, which includes: American Jewish Congress, Amit Women, B'nai B'rith, Emunah Women of America, Hadassah, Jewish Labor Committee, Jewish War Veterans, Jewish Women International, Na'amat USA, National Council of Jewish Women, Inc., National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Women's American ORT, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism; and National Association of Black Women Attorneys, National Breast Cancer Coalition, National Osteoporosis Foundation, National Ovarian Cancer Coalition, National Women's Health Network, National Women's Law Center, Women's Bar Association, and Women's Legal Defense Fund.

I am hopeful that the 105th Congress will build upon the foundation established by the Kassebaum-Kennedy health reform bill. With this new legislation, it is my goal to ensure that no American woman will have to worry that if she takes a genetic test for the BRCA1 or BRCA2 breast cancer gene, she will lose her insurance coverage; or, that if she develops breast cancer, she will be denied coverage for treatment because her genetic predisposition will be considered a "pre-existing condition." Congress has the power to protect all Americans from genetic discrimination in

health insurance. We should do so quickly and decisively by passing the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination in Health Insurance Act.

SALUTING DIXIE WILKS-OWENS

HON. ROBERT T. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 7, 1997

Mr. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute Dixie Wilks-Owens, who is retiring from the California Employment Development Department after 27 years of dedicated service. Throughout her career, Mrs. Wilks-Owens has earned a reputation among her peers as an outstanding communicator and public servant genuinely enthusiastic about her job and the opportunities it provides to affect positive change.

Most recently, Mrs. Wilks-Owens served as chairperson of the 1996 Work Force Preparation Conference, a highly successful public forum on workforce preparation issues which was held in conjunction with the Federation of Conferences.

While at the office of work force policy, Mrs. Wilks-Owens was staff to the State job training coordinating councils' planning committee. She prepared agendas and policy issue papers, analyzed Federal and State legislation and made presentations to the SJTCC, task forces, and other committees on work force preparation issues.

Prior to this position, Mrs. Wilks-Owens was the manager and assistant deputy director of the EDD Marketing Services Office. In this role, she is noted for having developed the first biennial strategic marketing plan and for writing and producing the EDD employee handbook. In addition, she was an integral force in the planning, developing, and management of a full-functioning reemployment center for displaced legislative staffers left unemployed by Proposition 140. Additionally, she oversaw the planning and coordination of a broad retraining and reemployment program serving 5,000 former General Motors workers in Fremont, CA.

Mrs. Wilks-Owens also served as a Federal legislative specialist in the EDD legislative liaison office. There, she tracked and analyzed Federal legislation, spearheaded the successful 1989 job service campaign and made legislative presentations.

As an active member of the International Association of Personnel in Employment Security [IAPES], she has served as California Legislative chair, California vice president, California president, International Legislative chair and District XV representative and California Legislative chair.

In addition to her professional pursuits, Mrs. Wilks-Owens has demonstrated a unique commitment to her community and is noted as a tireless volunteer and master organizer.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to recognize Dixie Wilks-Owens for her outstanding commitment to her profession. I ask my colleagues to join me in wishing her continued success in all of her future endeavors.

JOB SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1997

HON. JOE KNOLLENBERG

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 7, 1997

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Job Skill Development Act of 1997. This is a narrowly tailored bill which amends the Fair Labor Standards Act [FLSA] of 1938 to ease some of the restrictions on volunteering.

The FLSA requires covered employers to compensate individuals defined as an "employee" with minimum wage and overtime. While there are numerous exceptions for volunteers, these exceptions primarily focus on humanitarian and charitable activities. Unfortunately, individuals seeking to gain valuable work experience and exposure in a competitive profession are often prohibited from doing so because of restrictions on volunteering.

The FLSA revolves around a complex scheme of regulations and exceptions. When the Department of Labor and the Federal courts determine who is and is not exempt, they take into account the type of services provided by the individual, who benefits from the rendering of the services, and how long it takes to provide the services. Some of the most common exceptions are for trainees or student learners better known as interns. These exceptions were developed because of their educational benefit as well as the potential to learn valuable skills for future employment.

However, just as the FLSA protects some, it can be an obstacle for others. Capitol Hill provides an excellent example. Each year hundreds of college and high school students travel to Washington, DC, for internships. Many of these positions are unpaid or offer a stipend, well below the minimum wage and overtime requirements. These individuals gain a better understanding of the legislative process, develop office skills, and make contacts that are invaluable in securing employment. Meanwhile, the employer is able to evaluate the intern in a work environment. For both it is a win-win situation.

Two particular individuals on my staff volunteered in my office for several months before they were hired on as full-time paid employees. However, because these two staffers were recent college graduates and produced work that benefited my office, they would have been prohibited from volunteering their services if at the time I would have been forced to comply with the FLSA.

Though Congress has since passed the Congressional Accountability Act and now must adhere to the FLSA, the point is not moot. Congress and hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals over the years have benefited from such programs. In fact, many have become employed for the first time because of the opportunity and experience they gain through interning. I hope we could learn from these instances and not turn our backs on those who wish to gain valuable work experience.

Moreover, as we enter the 21st century and the global marketplace becomes even more competitive, we must strive to help those who wish to enter the work force. Programs like Careers and School to Work offer some the